Health Authority

707.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the responsibility of the health authority as arranging for all levels of health services, assuring the quality of all health services, identifying lines of medical authority for the inmate health program and assuring that inmates have access to all health services.

The policy also establishes properly monitored processes, policies, procedures and mechanisms to ensure that the contracted scope of services is adequately and efficiently delivered.

The health authority is defined as the contract medical provider, health services administrator or health agency responsible for providing all heath care services or coordinating the delivery of all heath care services (see the Health Care Administrative Meetings and Reports Policy).

707.2 POLICY

The health authority is responsible and accountable for all levels of health care and has the final authority regarding clinical issues within this correctional facility. The health authority is responsible for establishing, implementing, and annually reviewing/revising policies for all clinical aspects of the health care program and for monitoring the appropriateness, timeliness, and responsiveness of care and treatment. The health authority also approves all medical decisions and protocols.

707.3 SELECTION PROCESS

The Sheriff or the authorized designee shall select a health authority using an existing office procurement or selection process. The individual or organization selected shall be designated as the health authority for inmate health care on behalf of the facility.

Aside from any monetary or term considerations, the contract between the Office and the selected individual or organization shall minimally include:

(a) Language establishes the scope of services being contracted and the type of health care service needed.

(b) Job descriptions, minimum qualifications, and performance expectations for contract personnel.

(c) Language requiring the contractor to develop appropriate measures and review processes for assessing the quality, effectiveness, and timeliness of the services provided, and periodically reporting those findings to the facility.

(d) Identification of a healthcare professional, who shall serve as the medical authority on treatment matters requiring medical expertise and judgment.

(e) Language regarding the minimum frequency that the health authority shall be present at the facility.

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(f) The roles and responsibilities of staff in ensuring that the contractor may adequately deliver services in a safe and secure environment.

(g) A written plan for coordinating medical care from multiple health care services.

1. The plan should include procedures for making inmate medical records available to a managed health care system as permitted by RCW 70.48.100.

(h) A written plan for the collection and maintenance of inmate health records that is compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

(i) Identification of a dispute resolution process for the contracted parties and for inmates who may be questioning treatment plans.

(j) Language and a plan addressing issues of liability and indemnification for issues related to inmate health care.

The health authority shall be authorized and responsible for making decisions about the deployment of health resources and the day-to-day operation of the health services program. If the health authority is other than a physician/ARNP, any final clinical judgments shall rest with a single, designated, Responsible Physician/ARNP.

The health authority or the authorized designee will meet at least monthly with custody representatives to discuss the health care program and any issues that require correction or adjustment.

Security regulations are applicable to facility staff and health care personnel.

707.4 PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE

The health authority is responsible for arranging the availability of health care services. The qualified health care professionals should determine what medical services are needed on a case-by-case basis. The Chief Deputy of Corrections shall provide the administrative support for making the health care services available to inmates. Clinical decisions are the sole province of the qualified health care professionals and should not be countermanded by non-health care professionals.

If routine health services are provided by medical personnel outside this facility, all office policies regarding treatment, transfer, transportation or referral of emergencies shall be followed.

The health authority is responsible for ensuring that the health services manual complies with all applicable state and federal law and that a review is conducted annually. An annual audit of the quality and adequacy of health care services should be done, with corrective action taken when deficiencies are identified.

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